

REMARKS

This is in response to the non-final Official Action currently outstanding with regard to the above-identified application.

Claims 1-15 were pending at the time of the issuance of the currently outstanding Official Action. The foregoing Amendment amends Claims 1, 2, 4, 9, 10 and 12-15 for clarity. No Claims are added, canceled, or withdrawn. Accordingly, upon the entry of the foregoing Amendment, Claims 1- 15 as hereinabove amended will constitute the claims under active consideration in this application.

Specifically, in the currently outstanding non-final Official Action, the Examiner has:

1. Acknowledged Applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 USC 119 (a)-(d) and (f), and confirmed the receipt of the required copies of the priority documents by the United States Patent and Trademark Office.
2. Failed to acknowledge and accept the drawings filed with this application on 16 January 2004
– **Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner provide an indication concerning the acceptability of the drawings filed with this application on 16 January 2004 in response to this communication.**
3. Acknowledged Applicant's Information Disclosure Statement as filed concurrently with this Application on 16 January 2004 by providing Applicant with a copy of the Form PTO 1449 that accompanied that Statements duly signed, dated and initialed by the Examiner in confirmation of his consideration of the publications listed therein.
4. Provided Applicants with a Notice of References Cited (Form PTO-892);
5. Indicated that Claims 1-3, 5-11 and 13-15 are allowed.

6. Rejected Claims 4 and 12 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicant regards as the invention, but indicated that those claims would be allowable if they were to be amended or rewritten so as to overcome this ground of rejection.

No further comment regarding items 1-5 above is deemed to be required in these Remarks.

With respect to item 6 above, the Examiner has asserted in support of his rejections under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, that with regard to Claim 4 the term “third association information storing means” is recited without any preceding “third association information storing means” in parent Claim 1. Similarly, with regard to Claim 12, the Examiner has asserted that the term “third association information memory” is recited without any preceding “third association information memory” in parent claim 9. Applicant agrees, but nevertheless respectfully traverses the Examiner’s bases for rejection.

In support of the foregoing traversal, Applicant respectfully calls the Examiner’s attention to the fact that both Claim 4 and Claim 12 both are written so as to cover the elements in their respective parent claims plus additional elements. In this respect, Applicant respectfully notes that each of Claims 4 and 12 includes the phrase “further comprising” following the recitation of their respective dependencies on Claims 1 and 9. Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that since the subject matters of Claims 4 and 12 are directed to elements in addition to the elements claimed in their respective parent claims, rather than to further limitations upon the elements already present in their respective parent claims, Claims 4 and 12 respectively cover the elements present in their respective parent claims plus the elements specifically recited in Claims 4 and 12 respectively without being limited to the combinations of elements so recited. The Examiner, of course, will recall that the use of the term “comprising” in a claim is indicative of the fact that the applicant is claiming the elements specifically recited without precluding the coverage of the elements specifically recited in a combination that includes the claimed elements as well as additional elements. If the Applicant was claiming coverage directed to only the specific elements recited in the claims, he would have used the term “consisting”, rather than the term “comprising”.

Consequently, Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner's stated bases of rejection of Claims 4 and 12 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, is in error. Indeed, if this was not the case, the Examiner would have been forced to reject Claim 2 that is directed to the combination comprising the elements recited in Claim 1 as well as further comprising the elements recited in Claim 2, even though the elements recited in Claim 2 were not recited in Claim 1 and hence do not have antecedent bases in Claim 1. Clearly, the latter result would not have been correct, and Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner's rejections of Claims 4 and 12 are not correct for the same reasons.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the currently outstanding rejections of Claims 4 and 12 be withdrawn in response to this communication.

Despite the foregoing, Applicants understand that the Examiner in the currently outstanding Official Action is attempting to point out a source of potential confusion arising from the fact that Claim 4 is directed to a combination including "first association information storing means" and "third association information storing means" without mentioning "second association information storing means". Similarly, Applicants understand that the Examiner in the currently outstanding Official Action is attempting to point out a source of potential confusion arising from the fact that Claim 12 is directed to a combination including "first association information memory" and "third association information memory" without mentioning "second association information memory". For the reasons stated above, Applicant respectfully submits that Claims 4 and 12 as they stood at the time of the issuance of the currently outstanding Official Action are appropriately phrased and not correctly subject to a rejection under 35 USC 112, second paragraph.

Nevertheless, in recognition of the Examiner's indication that Claims 4 and 12 appear to be somewhat confusingly presented, Applicant by the foregoing Amendment has now amended Claims 1, 2 and 4 so as to change the terminology "first association information storing means", "second association information storing means" and "third association information storing means" so as to read -- means for storing first association information--, -- means for storing second association information-- and -- means for storing third association information-- in order to clarify the phraseology of those claims. Similarly, Applicant has amended Claims 9, 10 and 12 so as to change the terminology "first association information memory", "second association information memory" and "third association information memory" to -- a memory for storing first association information--, -- a memory for storing second association information-- and -- a memory for storing third association information -- in order to clarify the phraseology of those claims. Further, additional minor clarifying amendments have been made to the claims throughout.

Applicant respectfully submits that the foregoing amendments remove any possible confusion arising as a result of the previous phraseology chosen for those claims, and requests entry of the foregoing Amendment on that basis.

In view of the foregoing Amendment and Remarks, therefore, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application in response to this submission.

K. Miyamoto, et al
USSN: 10/759,512
Page 13

Applicant believes that additional fees beyond those submitted herewith are not required in connection with the consideration of this response to the currently outstanding Official Action. However, if for any reason a fee is required, a fee paid is inadequate or credit is owed for any excess fee paid, you are hereby authorized and requested to charge and/or credit Deposit Account No. **04-1105**, as necessary, for the correct payment of all fees which may be due in connection with the filing and consideration of this communication.

Respectfully submitted,

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SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER

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